

Many books influenced my life. I do not want to select any particular one. Therefore, I am selecting a creative work of art that I recently observed. It did not have an influence in shaping my perspective and thought. This art work captured many of my thoughts. This essay reflects, in part, my varied interests and pursuits. The name is *Greenlanders by Travis Hinshaw*. I will try to recapture that moment in time upon first viewing this magnificent piece.

Recently, while walking through an art exhibit, I came upon a piece of art that immediately placed me into a contemplative and reflective moment. This experience reminded me of a former Tibetan Monk of high standing, a new friend that I met in Manhattan. Upon viewing 'artifacts' at the Metropolitan Museum, he gifted me the story of his father who held the art of repairing ancient religious statues within his community. At a particular moment in time, I turned around to speak to him. To my amazement he was standing in front of an 'artifact' in deep recitation and meditative reflection unaware of his surroundings. This happened at particular stations that had meaning for him. (The Metropolitan Museum became a temple of worship for this gentleman.) It was as natural as breathing. His practice was a part of his being. Two couples as they walked by were making negative comments while chuckling among themselves. I walked over to them explaining that these pieces are not 'artifacts' to be viewed, but rather depictions of ideas to be reflected upon. It is not an outer meaning but rather an inner understanding and seeing. They are a part of his life and the life of his community. My experience was not the same as my friend, but it was similar. If I could only have one work of art within my future home, I thought this would be it.

The carved wood contains multi-layers of inlaid wood. The natural grain adds movement and design. Fire was used creating further depth and color. The lines etched are simple, yet precise and artfully done. It is three dimensional in nature and possibly more in a metaphysical sense. It captured the elements of earth, air, water and fire.

Two giant whales are traveling together in the midst of an iceberg that reaches downward into the depth of the ocean. Both whales seem to be floating in the midst of a cavern. Their rolling graceful

movement is captured. Their gentleness is felt. The detail depicts two unique whales varied in shades of color and size. The teeth of one are finely etched with precision. Air bubbles are streaming upward. There is a sense of majesty and beauty. There is tenderness toward each other while casually moving through the cavern not in any rush, not impeded by any obstruction.

As my eyes moved up the carving viewing layers of ice formed beneath the sea creating a cave like appearance, I thought how thick and deep the ice formed below the surface creating mountains reaching downward toward a bottomless like ocean floor. I am reminded of a description of a flower or a tree's roots established above, while the bloom of the flower or tree reaches downward.¹ In the midst of all this, the depth of silence is felt except for their tonal sounds as they are more than likely communicating between each other. I wonder how long it will be before the inverted ice mountains will disappear. A glacier that I once skied upon, I was told no longer exists.

A small traditional canoe with possibly an Alaskan Inuit is finely etched into the wood. How small man is as he quietly paddles his canoe over this majestic scene taking place seemingly unaware of what lies below. Yet, it is possible that this individual is aware and senses what is taking place below due to his connection to nature and sentient beings. I think it is the same for the whales knowing what is above.

He or she is not in opposition to them. There is no threat. I see the one living with the other. If the Inuit uses a whale for its sustenance and survival, traditionally it will be used in varying means, respectfully treated, with full appreciation knowing the life and spirit of the giant whose life provides toward the Alaskan Inuit's survival. The cycle of life will return as the traditional seed in varied forms. I am reminded of a question asked, "Why are you creating mankind that will only spill blood?"² I think

¹This is a reference to Timaeus and other ancient texts.

²"When your Lord said to the angels, I am appointing someone as my deputy on earth, "They said (almost protesting), "Are You appointing therein one who will cause destruction and bloodshed, even though we (are the ones who) commemorate Your name and glorify You? The Lord said, "I know that which you do not know." The Holy Quran, English Translation by Muhammad Sarwar, 6th Edition, 2011. Sponsored by Sajjad Foundation, Singapore.

how small mankind is in comparison to the universe in which he lives. These massive, gentle, curious, intelligent, communicative giants do not harm any other in the way that small man inflicts such destruction. The U.S. military has no regard for what lies below the ocean surface as they conduct their destructive military exercises destroying life below as it does above.³ I reflect further upon the environmental degradation due to varied pollutants in the water that cause death and illnesses, not only to mankind, but to these gentle giants and other ocean wildlife. A piece of plastic can cause great injury leading to death. Chemicals creating cancers and other varied illnesses are imposed upon these giants and other sea life.⁴ As I reflect upon the reality of the destructive forces of mankind, particularly by the United States citizenry upon their surroundings, places seen and not seen, and communities afar; this piece of artwork reminds me of the careless destructive forces by modern man as he occupies and colonizes other lands. He, too, is occupying and colonizing the massive ocean expanse while destroying these beautiful living creatures and their home.

The man quietly paddling above a majestic living interaction taking place below is negatively impacted, too. Not only in the most obvious sense, but by the sustenance and warmth that he may receive from this giant, the pollutants absorbed and ingested in the whale will be transferred into his system. Pollutants not caused by either upon one another or to themselves. Not too long ago, there were not any pollutant elements to cause harm to both. These pollutants in varied forms are imposed upon them. They each will have illnesses unheard of among both their communities. It is already occurring.

The most remote places on our planet are destroyed and are only getting worse while causing further harm. Unlikely to be undone, except by volcanic eruptions that will pull and capture it into the inner volcanic caverns as the Earth reverts upon itself cleansing what mankind has recklessly done.⁵

³Refer to Dahr Jamail.net and his articles on Truth-out.org regarding detailed reporting on the U.S. Military's impact on the ocean and the environment.

⁴ BlueVoice.org, Ocean contamination: Dolphins, Whales and Humans Imperiled by ocean contamination.
http://www.bluevoice.org/news_toxic.php

⁵This is a reference to my idea of a section in Plato's Timaeus.

I return to the quiet scene of a particular man, among mankind, who has an inter-relationship with his surroundings, seen and not seen, unlike the majority of those within our modern world. As the two whales are idly traveling the ocean, they as well, have an interconnection with their surrounding world. This artist is deeply connected with his universe and understands the interconnection of its elements of earth, fire, water and air (the breath of man and whale).